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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEPGDA/USEUCOM JIC VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 001733

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2017  
TAGS: [MOPS](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#)  
SUBJECT: GREEK FIRES: AUGUST 30 UPDATE

REF: A. ATHENS 1721 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. STATE 121348

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) The Greek Government is increasingly establishing control over the wild fires, although anticipated increases in temperature and wind over the weekend may cause further outbreaks. The government is also aggressively pursuing arson cases, although the extent to which the fires were caused by arson remains unclear. The Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Public Order have told us that no/no U.S. military assistance for humanitarian relief is required at this time. The 8/29 public demonstration against the fires and destruction to the environment drew over 10,000. End Summary.

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Fires Abating  
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[1](#)2. (U) The Greek Fire Service publicly reports increasing control over the fires. Lower temperatures and less wind have helped. Firefighting efforts remain concentrated on the Western Peloponnese and the island of Evia.

[1](#)3. (U) Although things are looking better, weather forecasters are predicting an increase in temperature and wind, which could further stoke fires throughout Greece.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Meanwhile, the government is aggressively pursuing suspected arson. Since August 26, the government reports 52 documented arson cases and police have made 73 arrests: 41 for arson by negligence (at least one individual was charged for failing to extinguish a cigarette that caused a brush fire), 28 with intentional arson, and 4 with attempting intentional arson. The Fire Service reports an additional 24 cases under investigation for possible arson.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Comment: Although some in government initially suggested the fires were the result of an "organized plan," government officials are now avoiding mention of this theory. End Comment.

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No Military Assistance Required  
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[1](#)6. (C) The DATT and A/DCM were separately informed on 8/30 that the Government of Greece requires no military assistance for humanitarian relief. The A/DCM was given this message by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Public Order. The DATT was given this message by CHOD Grapsas's Executive Assistant. Grapsas's EA said that the CHOD had consulted with Defense Minister Meimarakis before taking his decision.

Embassy Athens will therefore not be seeking to provide military support for humanitarian purposes to the Government of Greece at this time. (NOTE: Embassy Athens will continue to offer any assistance needed for Greek-American community humanitarian relief efforts. END NOTE).

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Embassy Volunteer Response  
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¶7. (U) A joint team of American and local employees are organizing an Embassy Athens volunteer response to help those affected by this crisis. Embassy activities include:  
-- Blood donations to help offset depleted supplies;  
-- Donations of requested items (food, bedding, toiletries, etc.) to the Hellenic Red Cross;  
-- Organization of an Embassy Volunteer Corps that will work with Greek NGOs to identify specific areas where Embassy volunteers will travel on weekends to assist with clean-up, reconstruction, and damage mitigation.

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Demonstrations  
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¶8. (U) The 8/29 public demonstration to protest the fires and the concomitant environmental damage drew a large crowd. Press reports that over 10,000 showed up. The protest was largely apolitical, although indications are the general public is dissatisfied both with the government response and the opposition's apparent efforts to use the fires to discredit the government.

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POTUS Condolence Message  
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¶9. (U) Embassy delivered Ref B condolence message to PM Karamanlis' office on 8/30; Embassy IO followed-up with the MFA Spokesman. The GOG has not yet released the text to the public.  
COUNTRYMAN